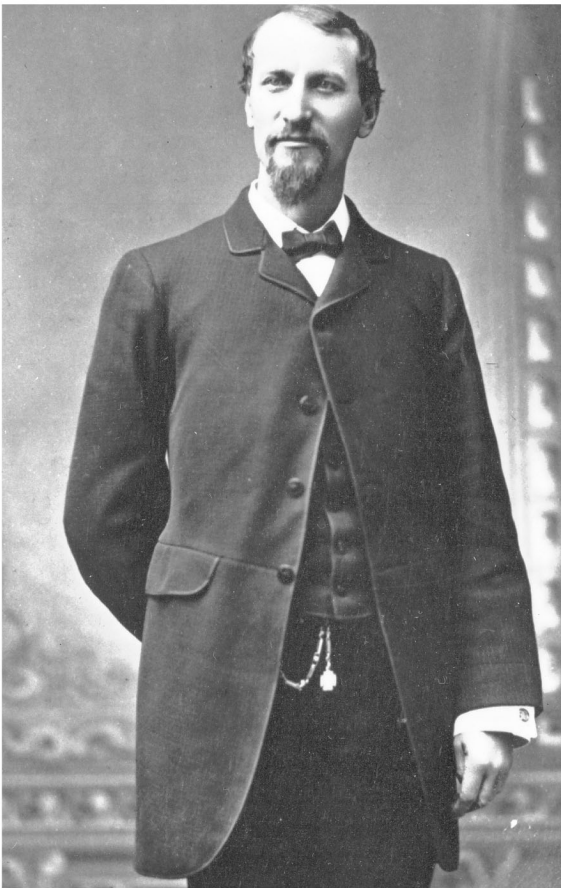


By the Kansas State Historical Society

Fred Harvey: A British Immigrant Creates Jobs



Many British immigrants came to Kansas. In England the cities were crowded and there was not much land available. Fred Harvey was one British immigrant who came to Kansas. He moved to the United States when he was 15 years old. He lived in New York, New Orleans, and St. Louis before he came to Kansas. He worked in restaurants in these places.

Fred Harvey and his family moved to Leavenworth where he took a job with the railroad. He saw that railroad passengers had a hard time getting a good meal. People traveling in the West had to go a long way. They had few choices for food. Sometimes a town restaurant took so long preparing the food that the travelers missed their trains. Some restaurants sold the same food to the next travelers! Harvey had an idea to make this better.

Why not open restaurants in railroad depots so passengers did not have to go so far? That was Harvey's idea. He would provide good food. His restaurants would be clean and nice. Harvey took his idea to the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway. They liked the idea. He opened his first Harvey House Restaurant in Topeka in 1876. It was a great success. Later Harvey opened more restaurants and hotels all over the southwest United States. He also provided food service on train cars. Passengers did not have to get off of the trains to eat good food.





Fred Harvey started one of the first chain restaurants. This created many jobs. Harvey House restaurants were good places to eat. Table cloths and fine china were used in each. Food orders were taken on the train and sent ahead to the next station. That way the food was ready for people when they got there. Harvey hired young women to serve customers. They were known as "Harvey girls."

Harvey girls were between 18 and 30 years old. They were educated. Harvey insisted that they have good manners. Each girl signed a contract. She agreed not to marry until her contract was finished. The girls wore black dresses and white aprons. They were not allowed to wear makeup or jewelry. A good waitress could earn up to \$17.50 a month plus tips. Harvey also gave these girls free housing and food. Being a Harvey girl was a very good job at a time when there were few jobs for women.

Fred Harvey's goal was to give railroad passengers a pleasant eating experience. He started 47 Harvey House restaurants, 15 hotels, and 30 railroad dining cars during his lifetime. He created thousands of jobs for people to serve his customers.

